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OBJECTIVE INFORMATION ON MILITARY MATTERS

Working paper submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

At the 1990 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission the United Kingdom presented a working paper for the item "Objective information on military matters" (A/CN.10/140 of 8 May 1990). That working paper gave general views on the item for the 1990 introductory discussions. For the 1991 session, the United Kingdom now submits a further paper with a view to forming agreed specific objectives and recommendations in the Disarmament Commission for concrete further action. It believes the structure of "Objectives, principles and mechanisms" advanced by the Soviet Union in 1990 (A/CN.10/142) is a useful one to pursue and will adopt this structure here.

Objectives

To encourage openness and transparency on military matters as a confidence-building measure for arms control and disarmament;

To avert crises and reduce the risk of military conflict, whether intentional or unintentional, by heading off dangerous misperceptions on competing sides;

To increase the predictability of military activities.

Principles

Recognition that measures to promote openness and transparency in military matters shall not entail the diminishing of States' security;

Across the board equality of States' rights, including their equal right of access to information obtained under multilateral agreements;

Consistency of the volume and range of information with the objectives of the regime of openness;

Provision of information on a regular basis;

Information should be accurate and subject to agreed procedures and, if appropriate, subject to verification;

Measures to promote openness and transparency may be unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, and may use the potential of the United Nations.

Mechanisms

The existing standardized United Nations reporting system for military expenditure should be adhered to by more States and its scope could be expanded;

Another regime could be established (or the above could be expanded) to deal with the provision of data on armed forces and armaments of Member States. The breakdown of forces could be simple (as exemplified by the annexed* summary of strength of armed forces in the United Kingdom statement on defence estimates);

More consideration should be given to an international register of arms sales under United Nations auspices. Such a register, provided it was universal and non-discriminatory, would have tangible benefits. The current United Nations Study on international arms transfer is important in this context;

Mechanisms need not use the United Nations. Unilateral measures (like the United Kingdom annual statement on defence estimates) help promote openness as do appropriate bilateral steps. Multilateral regional arrangements might also be desirable.

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* Annex in English only.

Annex

EXTRACT FROM UNITED KINGDOM STATEMENT ON THE DEFENCE ESTIMATES, VOLUME 2, 1990 (PAGE 5)

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
	£ million					
Defence budget (Supply estimates)	15,973	17,033	18,059	18,479	18,782	19,215
Defence expenditure (National Accounts definition)	16,394	17,431	18,467	18,968	19,199	19,648
Defence budget expenditure (Outturn)	15,487	17,122	17,943	18,163	18,858	19,072
of which: Personnel	5,726	5,983	6,379	6,890	7,212	7,572
Equipment	6,939	7,838	8,193	7,885	8,270	8,038
Other	2,822	3,302	3,370	3,387	3,374	3,462
Defence balance of payments: invisible transactions						
Total debits	1,254	1,453	1,548	1,734	1,733	1,830
Total credits	148	159	164	200	230	208
Net balance	-1,106	-1,293	-1,384	-1,534	-1,503	-1,622
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Defence visible trade: identifiable equipment						
Exports (£ million f.o.b)[1]	825	813	826	1,233	1,388	2,408
Imports (£ million c.i.f.)[1]	253	246	296	285	809	672
Manpower at April each year	Thousands					
Service						
UK Regular Forces	326	326	323	320	317	312
Locally entered	10	10	10	10	9	9
Regular reserves	198	208	212	220	230	240
Volunteer reserves	86	89	96	97	93	90
Cadet Forces	148	145	143	148	145	139
Civilian						
MOD Total	223	208	202	196	175	173
Non-industrial	114	105	104	104	99	99
Industrial	119	101	98	92	76	74
UK based	190	174	169	164	143	141
Locally engaged	33	32	32	32	32	31
	£ billion at market prices					
UK Gross Domestic Product	324.2	356.3	380.8	416.8	461.9	
General government total expenditure [2]	147.2	157.4	161.8	168.1	177.2	
of which:						
Defence	17.1	18.2	19.1	18.9	19.7	
Education	17.1	17.4	19.5	21.0	22.5	
Health	16.8	17.9	19.1	20.9	23.0	
Defence expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product	5.3	5.1	5.0	4.5	4.3	4.3[3]

Source: United Kingdom National Accounts 1990 Edition

1. Parts of guided weapons and missiles are included from 1987, and parts of military aircraft are included from 1988. Figures for earlier years exclude the trade in "parts".
2. Including debt interest and allowance for non-trading capital consumption not allocated to specific services.
3. Provisional estimate.